



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE arrests 16 gang members and associates in Massachusetts and Rhode Island *Latest actions under Operation Community Shield netting 133 arrests in New England in first year*

BOSTON—During a two-week enforcement operation that culminated yesterday, federal agents from the Department of Homeland Security’s U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested 14 gang members and associates in Massachusetts and 2 in Rhode Island in a joint effort with numerous law enforcement agencies.

The arrests are the latest under “Operation Community Shield,” a comprehensive initiative launched by ICE roughly one year ago to disrupt and dismantle transnational, violent street gangs in the United States. Operation Community Shield represents the first time the federal government has used immigration and customs authorities in a combined, national campaign against street gangs.

In Massachusetts, ICE agents arrested 14 gang members and associates from three violent street gangs in this most recent operation, MS-13, Vatos Locos and 18th Street. In the past year ICE agents have arrested 95 gang members throughout Massachusetts, and 133 across New England from the following gangs: MS-13, 18th Street, Vatos Locos, Mexican Mafia, Bloods and Sureno-13.

Of the 14 arrested during this two-week operation, most have violent criminal histories that include convictions for Assault & Battery with a Dangerous Weapon, Firearm, Assault & Battery with a Dangerous Weapon, Knife, Assault, Resisting Arrest, Vandalism, and Assault & Battery on a Police Officer. Criminal histories also include arrests and arraignments for Armed Assault to Murder, Rape of a Child, Assault to Kill, Rape of a Child with Force, Larceny, and Malicious Destruction of Property.

In Rhode Island, ICE agents arrested 2 gang members in this most recent operation, bringing the total in that state to 26 arrests. The arrests in Rhode Island represent members and associates of MS-13, 18th Street and the Latin Kings. During this most recent operation ICE arrested Sergio Paiz who is reported to be one of the local leaders of MS-13. He is a convicted felon and is currently being prosecuted by the United States Attorney in Rhode Island after being indicted for Re-Entry after Deportation Wednesday.

“There is no room for gang violence in our communities,” said Matthew J. Etre, acting special agent-in-charge for ICE in New England. “These gang members need to know that we are committed to ensuring public safety, and that we’re prepared to keep the pressure on through aggressive law

enforcement action. Working closely with law enforcement partners, we will use the full range of authorities available to ICE, to seek out, prosecute and remove these dangerous criminals from our streets and where possible, our country.”

Over the past year, ICE has conducted several targeted enforcement actions nationwide under Operation Community Shield, including the recent one. In total, these efforts have resulted in arrest 2,388 members of 239 different gangs. Roughly 51 of the individuals were gang leaders. Approximately 922 of those arrested were from the violent street gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). Those arrested under Operation Community Shield are either prosecuted criminally or removed from the country through immigration proceedings.

Partnerships with law enforcement

Law enforcement partnerships are critical to the success of Operation Community Shield. Collaboration in New England in this most recent operation is representative of efforts played out across the country.

In Boston for example, ICE partnered with the Boston, Chelsea, Lynn, and Revere Police Departments, the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department and the Chelsea, Lynn and East Boston Probation offices.

Other Operation Community Shield Partners that ICE has partnered with locally over the past year include the Everett, Lynn, Somerville, Malden and Peabody Police Departments, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Middlesex County Sheriff’s Department and the Massachusetts State Police.

In Rhode Island, ICE has partnered with the Providence Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the United States Attorney’s office in ongoing Operation Community Shield efforts.

ICE also worked with its partners at the federal level. For example, ICE agents teamed up with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in the recent operation to identify 48 gang members who have recently applied for immigration benefits. ICE compared its list of MS-13 targets against USCIS’ database of applicants for immigration benefits. This joint effort led to the arrest of 4 MS-13 members as well as the placement of immigration detainers on 8 MS-13 members who were already in federal, state, or local custody. ICE also de-conflicted all its gang targets with the FBI and other federal agencies prior to arrest.

About Operation Community Shield

Operation Community Shield was launched in February 2005 after a threat assessment by all ICE field offices identified MS-13 as one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the country. The assessment indicated that most of the gang members were foreign-born, in the United States illegally, had prior criminal convictions, and/or were involved in crimes that made them subject to ICE’s broad immigration and customs authorities.

ICE kicked off Operation Community Shield with an enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of more than 100 members of MS-13. In the months that followed, ICE agents nationwide

joined ranks and continued targeting MS-13 members in their jurisdictions. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs and prison gangs with foreign-born members.

Thus far, ICE agents from 76 field offices, working with law enforcement agencies nationwide, have arrested a total of 2,388 suspected street gang members and associates. These apprehensions include 533 criminal arrests and 1,855 administrative arrests. More than 1,075 of these suspects have violent criminal histories. As part of the operation, ICE agents have also seized roughly 117 firearms.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.